

CABINET COUNCIL ON MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Meeting #12
June 6, 1983, 2:00 p.m.
Room 208, OEOB

MINUTES

Attendees: Meese, Devine, Thayer, Harper, Niskanen, Wright, McNamar, Hesse, Mossinghoff, Jenkins, Bledsoe, Dunlop, Korten, Horner, Walters, Franklin

Personnel Management Improvement (CM#321)

Mr. Meese asked the Council about ways in which the Administration can bolster morale and productivity of the Federal workforce. He referenced several recent surveys of Federal employees attitudes, and said it has been his experience that morale and productivity go hand in hand. He also stressed the need for top management to pay more attention to this relationship. Mr. Devine compared previous and current surveys and studies of employee attitudes, pointing out that considerable dissatisfaction existed at comparable stages of the previous administration, and that agency heads rank personnel management as very important.

A number of opinions were expressed as to the nature and seriousness of the situation, but a consensus emerged that the Administration should take a positive and constructive approach to personnel management, consistent with achieving its reform objectives. Mr. McNamar felt that many of the changes made by the Administration have brought about the uneasiness. Mr. Thayer felt that morale is not very low or very high, and that a well thought out communication effort is needed. He suggested that many employees would welcome more discipline from managers if the objective is to upgrade the entire service and not to pick on individuals. Mr. Wright recommended that we demonstrate greater leadership and interest in good management, and let career executives know what is expected of them. Mr. Niskanen said we should not overreact since we came here to do a particular job, e.g. cost cutting, but that we should establish criteria, and make awards to members of the Senior Executive Service who help us accomplish this job. Ms. Hesse indicated that morale should be helped by stability in our organizations and by de-regulation of many Federal management activities such as travel. Mr. Mossinghoff stressed that pride in an organization is most important to morale, and that employees have linked our budget cutback proposals (pensions) too closely to managerial proposals (RIF reform).

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Mr. Harper pointed out three key elements important to improved morale. First, that our organizations are well run. Second, that people are well compensated. And third, that the Administration be responsive to grievances. He suggested that we institute a better survey of employee concerns, set priorities that can be communicated to employees, and work closely with SES careerists in carrying out these and other managerial functions. Mr. Devine stated that we have raised SES pay caps and that he meets regularly with agency personnel officers. Retirement changes are to blame for the negative reactions of employees.

Action: Mr. Meese closed the meeting by saying it may be desirable to establish a CCMA working group to explore these and other creative ideas. He urged Cabinet Council members to give further thought to next steps. Discussion of this topic will be resumed at a later CCMA meeting.

Time did not permit discussion of the other agenda items (administrative remedies, Federal civilian employment, and cash awards for non-career employees).